



Lutheran Schools Association of South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia Incorporated

Director's Report to Annual General Meeting 2011

What constitutes a Lutheran School?

For us, and for our Lutheran schools, Jesus is the reason for our existence and the presence of the school. He is its hub, its pivot, its whole being, and we gather around him in worship and service as he gives purpose to our lives. This, then, is Christian education. A school that espouses Christ is one that practises Christian education. Such a school has as its motto ***that Christ is in all things*** [Colossians 3:11]. Therefore, Christian education becomes the canopy that covers, the skin that enfolds, and the substance that permeates all that the school does. Christian education is the big picture and is, in a broad sense, everything the school is. Central to Christian education is worship and all the activities the school provides to encourage its students, staff and wider community to give expression of their faith. Throughout the entire range of the school's engagements, staff model what Christ means to them and, by God's grace and power, live '*...so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed...*' [2 Corinthians 4:10]. By all the school does it is voicing that all things come from God and each person is encouraged to find his or her place in the big picture, to discover the talents that God has provided, and to return those talents to him through a life of service to others. It is the Christian Education program that enables all life to become a celebration of discipleship.

But what are the marks one could expect of a Lutheran school? Surely, it is more than ownership by a District of the Lutheran Church, or a congregation, or an association of Lutheran members. Surely, it is more than having the word 'Lutheran' in the school's name, or as a sub-title. Surely, it is more than having a principal who is a member of the Lutheran Church.

We undergo supervision and meet requirements of registration by State or Territory authorities, or if we aspire to be an IB school we are put through a rigorous authorisation exercise. So, should we be required to meet certain provisions to be accredited as a Lutheran school, what might be the signs against which a Lutheran school could be assessed?

The possible accreditation elements to which a school might aspire could include the following:

- ✓ **Acceptance** of the station of others is patently noticeable.
- ✓ **Accreditation of staff** as required by the Lutheran Church of Australia is given diligent attention.
- ✓ **Behaviour management policies** reflect the school as a 'grace' place.
- ✓ **Christian Studies** is esteemed as a Key Learning Area.

- ✓ **Learning** is affected by the Lifelong Qualities for Learning and uses appropriate pedagogy to assist students to discover and develop their talents to the fullest in order to live a life of service to Christ and others.
- ✓ **Nomenclature** clearly defines the school as a Lutheran school and part of a wider network of Lutheran schools.
- ✓ **Pastoral care** of each other amongst staff, students and the extended school community is clearly supported.
- ✓ **Policies** mirror the Christ-centred objectives of the school, and the requisite policies of the Lutheran Church, Lutheran Education and Lutheran Systems are known and applied.
- ✓ **Service** is an essential element of learning as a response to the Gospel, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of others, and not for the purpose of promoting the school.
- ✓ **Spiritual development of staff** is given a regular and high priority.
- ✓ **Values**, generically accepted for Lutheran schools, are displayed and receive focus in learning programs and activities.
- ✓ **Visual evidence** of the centrality of the Gospel is openly exhibited through various art forms.
- ✓ **Worship** is meaningfully provided for students, staff and the extended school community.

I would encourage school councils and principals to consider the extent to which the 'characteristics of a Lutheran school' listed above are espoused by the school they govern and lead, as well as contemplating what other descriptors might apply to a Lutheran school.

Council Membership

Michael Paech, Principal, Good Shepherd, Para Vista [Chairperson]; **Jayne Zadow**, Governor, Lobethal [Vice-Chairperson]; **Lynette Schiller**, Director, Concordia Kindergarten, Murray Bridge; **Sue Ellis**, Teacher, Our Saviour, Aberfoyle Park; **Corrin Townsend**, Teacher, Cornerstone College, Mount Barker; **Lester Saegenschnitter**, Principal, Concordia College, Highgate; **Steve Kroker**, Bursar, Immanuel Primary School, Novar Gardens; **Phil Zanker**, Business Manager, Unity College, Murray Bridge; **Dennis Obst**, Governor, Concordia College, Highgate; **Sally Axten**, Indigenous Education Committee; **John Gerhardy**, Pastor, Calvary Morphett Vale; **Julian Denholm**, Principal, Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Palmerston/Howard Springs; **Mark Rathjen**, Principal, Living Waters Lutheran College, Warnbro; **Barry Kahl**, Director.

Staff

Barry Kahl [Director]; **Loyd Fyffe** [Deputy Director]; **Neville Grieger** [Spiritual Development Facilitator]; **Tyna Newman** [Business Manager]; **Anne Dohnt** [Christian Studies Officer – Kindergarten/Primary]; **Sue Kupke** [Christian Studies Officer – Secondary]; **Neil Lutz** [Human Resource Manager]; **Christine Reid** [Indigenous Education Facilitator]; **Mark Pumpa** [Financial Assistant]; **Rod Wearn** [ICT Education Support]; **Heather Waring** [Executive Assistant]; **Phyllis Vosgerau** [Administrative Assistant]; **Marlene Kahl** [Clerical Assistant].

Director's Role

The sudden death of the Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia has necessitated that since that time, the LSA Director has filled the role of Acting – Executive Director of LEA, while continuing to be the LSA Director. Occupying dual roles has not been without its complications, but the support of both the LSA Council and LEA Board, along with the dedication of the staff members of the respective offices, is acknowledged. We await the LEA Executive Director, Steve Rudolph, taking up office in early June.

Extension of the System

The Lutheran School System has existed in SA since 1975, while the LSA has been the recognised authority with the Australian Government for the two WA schools and three of the four NT schools. Previous Commonwealth legislation prevented a system from extending across State and Territory borders. However, in 2010, the Australian Government altered the regulations to make this possible, allowing all LSA schools in SA, NT and WA to be members of the LSA System. After meetings with the councils of schools in WA and NT those schools also applied to be members of the system. The willingness of these schools to become systemic is appreciated and will mean additional benefits to those schools. Systemic schools do not deal individually with the Australian Government but relate to it through the LSA, which is responsible collectively for all member schools to the Commonwealth and is able to distribute funding according to an LSA Annual General Meeting approved funding formula. In this regard it will be possible to distribute additional funding to also to NT and WA schools when circumstances require such support.

Enrolments

The 2010 August census revealed that there were 15,213 students in LSA schools, an increase of 2.8% over 2009. There were 419 students in the five SA Pre-Schools, up by 7.7%. SA Primary Schools increased by 2.2% to be 7121 and the 4,720 students attending SA Secondary Schools showed an increase of 2.1%. In 2010 WA school enrolments decreased by 4% when compared to the previous year when it was 1615. NT schools had an enrolment of 1338, up by 14%. Across Lutheran Education Australia 39 of the 85 Lutheran schools are members of the LSA System, catering for 40% of the total LEA enrolment. In all LEA schools, 17% of the enrolments are listed as being members of the Lutheran Church, which is 24% in LSA schools; boosted of course by the strength of Lutheran enrolments in SA. With regard to staff in LEA schools, 37% claim to be members of the Lutheran Church, with this being 44% in LSA schools. It is clear that the enrolment creates opportunities and difficulties that need to be realised and attended to, while, as far as staff members are concerned, we acknowledge the gift that members of other Christian collectives are to us. The divergent background of staff members, however, is an incentive for the LSA and all its schools to be diligent in their attention to the requirements of accreditation.

Open Arms Community Child Care Centre, Birdwood

Late last year, following the failure of a family business which had operated a Child Care Centre in a building owned by the Birdwood Parks Association for five years, the LSA was approached to operate this centre. Following discussions with Holy Cross Lutheran Church,

it was agreed that it would form an incorporated body to lease the building and be responsible for the centre. The LSA has taken out a licence to operate the centre, pending the incorporation of the governing body, which will then take on the licence. The centre opened on 31 January with Tamara Zilm as the Director. The Director and staff were installed at a service in the Birdwood Church on 20 February and a motion will be placed before the Annual General Meeting for the new venture to become a member of the Lutheran Schools Association.

Looking Back on the LSA Strategic Initiatives of 2009 – 2010

At the commencement of 2009 the LSA Council determined a long list of strategic initiatives for 2009 – 2010 and these have been realised as follows:

1. **Curriculum:** Structures have been put in place to support schools, and the Association of Independent Schools will provide support for the introduction of the national curriculum.
2. **School Registration:** A process for pre-registration support and the audit of school registration reports has been established.
3. **School - Congregation Relationships:** Promotion of appropriate ministry relationships has been ongoing, also through a discussion paper.
4. **Early Learning Centres:** A *Handbook* has been prepared to assist schools with the establishment of Early Learning Centres and placed on the LSA website. Direct support is being given to schools considering the establishment of such centres.
5. **Accreditation of Staff:** Special effort has been given to providing appropriate means for accreditation of professional development requirements to be accessible and up-to-date.
6. **Out of School Hours Care:** A group has been formed and is now a recognised interest group within the LSA.
7. **Performance Management of Senior Staff:** A generic approach for the performance management review of senior staff has been developed.
8. **Spiritual Development of School Leaders:** Numerous approaches have been developed to provide opportunities for the spiritual development of school leaders.
9. **School Council Development:** Policy and procedures have been accepted for the introduction to and ongoing professional development in school governance.
10. **Indigenous Education:** Strategic plan for the quadrennium 2009 – 2012 has been adopted and is being actioned.
11. **Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare:** Strategic approach accepted.

- 12. Principal Performance Development:** Review has led to a refined instrument which is now in use.
- 13. Cooperative Bargaining:** A comprehensive agreement for Lutheran schools in SA, NT and WA for 2011 – 2012 is being developed.
- 14. Employee Support:** An Employee Ombudsman has been appointed to assist Lutheran school employees in industrial matters.
- 15. School Policies:** Policy requirements of a school to meet LCA, LEA, LSA and registration and legal requirements have been determined and examples placed on the LSA website.

Looking Forward Strategically in 2011

The LSA Council has approved the following strategic focus areas for 2011:

- 1. We will provide support for principals and school councils in developing their understanding of, and responsibility for, the financial operations of a school.**

Rationale

Principals and school councils have fiduciary responsibility and it is necessary for them to have more than a basic understanding of financial policy. The major responsibility for a council is the appropriate setting and monitoring of the budget, while the Principal is ultimately responsible for the financial operation of the school.

- 2. We will develop a distinctive and interactive website for the LSA with links to the LEA and regional websites.**

Rationale

The current website is accessed via the LEA homepage, lessening our identity as a system, while being outdated and lacking in appeal. The website provides both public and member only information, but the public domain is meagre and provides little information that would attract searchers to our system. At the same time we need to take into account the wider consideration of LEA in regard to knowledge management.

- 3. We will review the funding arrangements for small schools to ensure that principals of these schools receive appropriate opportunities to fulfill their leadership responsibilities.**

Rationale

Schools where the enrolment is less than 150 currently receive additional funding of between \$10, 000 to \$15,000 and, like other schools, are eligible to receive emergency funding. In negotiating the salary level for primary principals, SALPPA

requested the shift of Level 1 salaries [for schools with enrolments of less than 150] to be equivalent to Level 2 [for schools with enrolments from 151-250]. The employer group argued that this was not possible considering budgets had already been set for 2011, and that the needs of principals in small schools might not necessarily relate to increased salary provisions. The employer group agreed that during 2011 the funding arrangements provided to those schools would be examined and changes made for 2012 (if required).

- 4. We will ensure that schools meet the accreditation requirements as prescribed in the LCA Staffing Policy, while endeavouring to provide programs that meet the needs of schools and staff through a variety of options.**

Rationale

The current policy places a substantial load, especially on teachers of Christian Studies, in their initial years in a Lutheran school. While not downplaying the need for suitably equipped staff, it is necessary to offer courses in a variety of modes.

- 5. We will work with schools to develop an understanding of what it means to be a Lutheran school.**

Rationale

Schools readily recognise the need to meet registration, legal and professional requirements, but do not always seem to put the emphasis on the requirements of the Church. As the responsible authority for our schools, not only recognised by Government, but also requested by the LCA, we need to determine what the LSA may reasonably expect to be evidenced in a Lutheran school. In the first instance it is also necessary for us to determine what these hallmarks are.

- 6. We will continue to encourage a connection between the school and congregation[s] and explore what that means.**

Rationale

The school-congregation partnership has long been a focus for the LSA, but ministry improvements are not uniformly evident. The paradigm that school ministry is focused on church involvement has been gently challenged through the recent school-congregation partnership discussion paper. We encourage further exploration of the idea that schools are a valid expression of 'church' in their own right. We aim to support schools in their initiatives to be 'church' in a way that breaks free from the traditional model of 'doing church'. This is not to deny our ongoing support for and connections to the traditional church body that gave birth to us, but to help school and congregation together move beyond the current way of thinking.

- 7. We will continue to show innovative leadership in information communication technology in our support for all our schools.**

Rationale

Personal contact with our schools in face-to-face encounters is essential, but there are many means at our disposal, through electronic means, to provide ongoing support for our schools in all the departments we operate.

Heading towards a Huge Celebration

The first Lutheran settlers arrived from Germany late in 1838, and already in 1839 the first Lutheran schools had commenced. The Lutheran Church of Australia will celebrate the 175th anniversary in connection with its next General Convention, which will now be held in 2013. The education committee is suggesting that we have special celebrations for the 175th anniversary of Lutheran schooling in 2014. It is planned that the 2014 staff conference be a combined event for all staff in SA Lutheran schools and the Convention Centre has been booked for this occasion. We should also consider how students from Lutheran schools could be involved at this time, or at a separate celebration. Such events could provide a significant impact on the wider community with regard to the longevity of Lutheran education and its connection with the education scene.

Conclusion

Along with the LSA Council and staff I thank you for your support of the Lutheran Schools Association, Lutheran Education Australia, the Lutheran Church and the mission of our schools. It is a God-given privilege to serve together with you.

Barry J Kahl
Director

May, 2011